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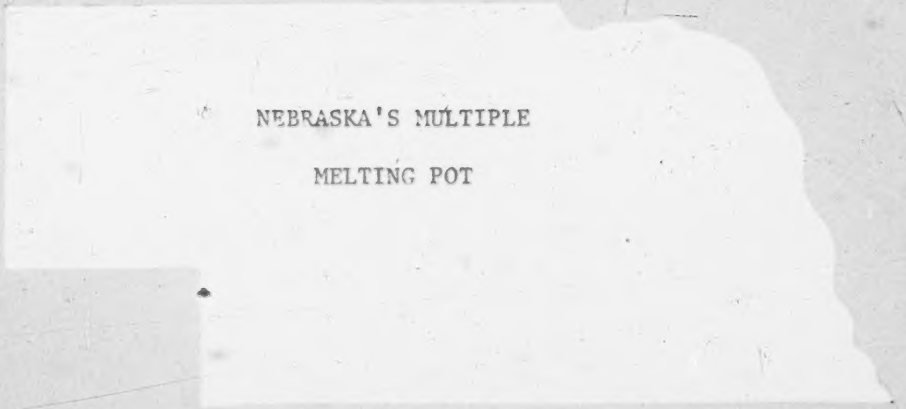

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NEBRASKA ANNUAL SOCIAL INDICATORS SURVEY

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NASIS-79 #9

NEBRASKA'S MULTIPLE MELTING POT

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Price: $1.00

The Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey

Lynn K. White: 1979 Study Director

The findings in this report are based on data collected in the third Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey (NASIS). This survey is part of an on-going study of the quality of life in Nebraska conducted by the Bureau of Sociological Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

In 1979 a representative sample of 1882 Nebraskans eighteen years of age or older living in households was interviewed by telephone. The respondents to the 1979 survey are part of a panel originally selected and interviewed in 1977 and 1978. They will be re-interviewed every two years in order to provide information on changing quality of life. The interviews averaged approximately 40 minutes and included questions about environment, health, crime, political attitudes, occupation, education, family life and other matters reflecting the quality of life experienced in the state. For the entire sample, 95 out of 100 times the percentages computed from the items asked on the survey are likely to be accurate to within plus or minus 2.3 percent of the figure that would have been obtained if each adult in Nebraska had been surveyed. This is an estimate of maximum error and for most items the percentages are likely to be even more accurate.

The data gathered by NASIS are used by a wide variety of State and local government agencies for policy and program planning and by faculty and students at the University of Nebraska and other colleges for research. No information identifying any respondent is released to any users and the strict confidentiality of individual respondents is rigidly enforced. While the final responsibility for the organization and structure of the survey and for reports produced under its name rests with the Bureau of Sociological Research, public agencies and University departments play an integral part in planning the survey through an Advisory Committee. Public organizations interested in membership on the Advisory Committee should contact the NASIS Study Director.

Funding for NASIS comes from the University of Nebraska, The Bureau of Sociological Research, and State and local agencies which buy items and data analysis from the survey.

The NASIS surveys are repeated each year to measure changes in the quality of life in Nebraska. While there is a core of questions which is included every year, each survey has a large component of unique items which address specific topical issues. Plans for future years include interviewing a new sample of Nebraskans in 1980 as well as continuing to re-interview the 1977 panel every two years to assess changes in their lives. Additional detail on the NASIS surveys regarding use of the survey data or cost of purchasing items on future surveys can be obtained by contacting Lynn K. White, NASIS Study Director, at the Bureau of Sociological Research or by sending for a copy of the 1980 NASIS Prospectus.

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INTRODUCTION

Israel Zangwell is credited with having popularized the analogy of America as a "melting pot" in his 1909 play by that name. His conception was of the eventual blending of all of the nation's diverse ethnic groups into a single, unique amalgam. The people would have a new culture, different and better than any of the originals -- it would be a hybrid or combination of them all.

Zangwell's single-cauldron imagery of America was questioned by research findings published in 1944 and 1952 by Ruby Jo Reeves Kennedy. From her study of marriages in New Haven, Connecticut she found that ethnic group ties were becoming less important, i.e., between 1870 and 1950 there had been a steady increase in marriages between people with different ethnic or national backgrounds. However, marriages continued to occur within each of the major religious groups, Protestant, Jewish, and Catholic. Furthermore, if the religious affiliations were different before marriage, one person typically converted to the religion of the other. The persistence of religious homogamy within marriages indicates, she said, that America has not one melting pot, but three. This conclusion was reiterated by August Hollingshead (1950:624) in his more inclusive report of factors associated with the selection of marriage mates in New Haven:

> From the viewpoint of assimilation, marriages across religious lines are crucial if the triple melting pot is to become a single melting pot. But as Kennedy's and our data show, we are going to have three pots boiling merrily side by side with little fusion between them for an indefinite period.

Research since Kennedy and Hollingshead has tended to focus on either interfaith or interethnic marriage, but not on both simultaneously. Thus research findings have been valuable in helping to better understand the many factors associated with mate selection, but they have only indirectly provided information with respect to the validity of the triple melting pot hypothesis. For example, Thomas's (1951) study of Catholic marriages shows that the out-marriage rate for Catholics varies with their proportion in a given population. This led him to suggest that New Haven

is not representative or typical of interfaith marriage rates in other parts of the country. Cahnman (1961) reported that the rate of exogamy among Jews differs by their level of education. Hence, any study of interfaith marriages among Jews should take their educational attainment into consideration. Greeley (1970) has found that out-marriage rates vary considerably among different Protestant denominations. If Kennedy and Hollingshead had examined mixed marriage at the denominational level, their conclusions might have been different. Nevertheless, as useful as these and similar studies have been, they have not really tested the idea of a triple melting pot. To test this hypothesis we need to know both the ethnic and religious characteristics of married couples. If the proposition is correct, we should find that individuals are more likely to have married outside their ethnic than their religious groups and that the most salient feature in this regard is being Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish. Additionally, assuming the continued development of a triple melting pot since the Kennedy and Hollingshead studies, research should find that there has been an increase in ethnic but little variation in the rate of religious intermarriage.

The 1979 Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey (NASIS) provided an opportunity to test the triple melting pot hypothesis and the purpose of this report is to present some of the findings from that study. As will be discussed below, we were able to measure both the religious preferences and ethnicity of married couples and to obtain additional information that allowed us to avoid some of the possible shortcomings of the original studies.

MEASUREMENT

The NASIS study acquired information from a representative sample of 1,882 persons residing in the state who were living in households and eighteen years of age or older. The present report is based on the 1,271 of these individuals who

are white and were married and living with a spouse at the time of the interview.[1]

To measure a respondent's ethnicity he or she was asked "From what country or part of the world did your ancestors come?" If a single country was named, this was used to classify the person's ethnicity. Among those answering two or more countries, we asked which one they felt closest to. If one was chosen, this was used to determine ethnicity. Some individuals could not choose between two or more national origins and a few could not name any. Both of these groups were coded as "ethnicity unknown." Ethnicity of the spouse was obtained by asking the respondent the same questions about him or her.

Respondents were asked their religious preference and that of their spouse. If a person answered "Protestant," he or she was asked for the denomination as well. In the present study we made no distinctions among Lutheran synods, Baptist conventions and similar intradenominational divisions. Those indicating no religious preference were coded as "none."

In addition to ethnicity and religion we also obtained measures of certain factors that previous research has found to have a bearing on the choice of a spouse. These were to be used primarily as "control variables" to allow us to better ascertain the independent effects of ethnicity and religion on mate selection. Thus, at the individual level we measured the respondent and spouse's education, age at marriage, and date of marriage. At the structural level we measured the size of the community in which the couple lived and the educational, religious, and ethnic propinquity of each individual. Propinquity, as used here, refers to how close an individual lived to potential spouses who had the same characteristic (education, religion, ethnicity) relative to all potential spouses.[2]

Marital religious homogamy was defined as a husband and wife having the same religion. However, unlike the Kennedy and Hollingshead studies discussed above, Protestants married to Protestants were considered homogamous only if the partners

indicated the same denominational preference. Marital ethnic homogamy was defined as present if the husband and wife had the same national origin.

FINDINGS

Among the Nebraskans in the NASIS sample religious homogamy is almost twice as frequent as ethnic homogamy. About eight of every ten (80.4 percent) have a spouse with the same religious preference while slightly more than four in ten (41.5 percent) are married to a person with the same ethnicity. This, of course, establishes that religious homogamy is more common than ethnic homogamy, but it does not demonstrate that either one has an independent effect on mate selection. It is possible, for example, that homogamy occurred not because it was a relevant consideration for marriage but simply because people with the same religious preference or ethnicity lived near each other. Thus, the next step in the analysis was to ascertain whether these factors actually had an influence in choosing a spouse.

Although Nebraska's population includes many different nationalities, the sample sizes of most of these groups are too small for separate analysis. Nevertheless, the findings for the seven largest groups, who together comprise 58 percent of the total, provide information regarding the relevance of ethnicity in mate selection.

As can be seen from the "percent homogamous" column in Table 1, all of the groups have some members who are married to persons with the same national origin. However, the percentages for both sexes show considerable variation. For the males the range is from a low of 11.3 percent among those tracing their ancestry to Denmark to a high of 58.2 percent for those of German descent. The percentages for females are slightly different, but the pattern is essentially the same.

The "adjusted percent homogamous" column in Table 1 shows the percentages

after removing the influences of the other mate-selection variables, e.g., education, community size.[3] That the percentages are not changed a great deal offers additional support for the conclusions that ethnicity does influence mate choice and that the particular ethnic group one belongs to makes a difference in the salience of this factor in choosing a husband or wife. These findings, however, do not account for the large variation in ethnic group sizes. Even if ethnicity was totally irrelevant in mate selection, a person from a proportionally large group would be more likely to marry someone from that group than a person from a smaller group.

To control for differences in group size we estimated the "percent homogamous above random selection." The findings are shown in the last column of Table 1. These figures were computed by subtracting the percentage of persons of the opposite sex having the same ethnicity as the subjects from the adjusted percent homogamous. For example, among the males of German origin the adjusted percent who are married homogamously is 53.2. However, 42.7 percent of the women in the sample are of German descent. This may be considered the random probability of marital ethnic homogamy for German-origin males. When this percentage is subtracted from the adjusted percent homogamous we have the percent above chance selection, 10.5 percent in this case. This does not mean, of course, that all of the other homogamous marriages actually occurred by chance selection, but simply that they could have. Examination of the findings in this column suggests that the Czechoslovakian group may be the most likely to be using ethnicity as a part of its mate-selection criteria.[4] Among males those with English backgrounds rank second whereas those of Polish descent rank second among the females.

Generally, the findings presented in Table 1 indicate that ethnicity does have an independent effect on the selection of a spouse and that the strength of this influence is greater in some groups than in others.

The five religious groups largest enough for separate analysis make up 82.7 percent of the sample. The findings for these groups with respect to marital religious homogamy were computed using the same procedures as for assessing the influence of ethnicity on marital choice and are presented in Table 2.

Looking first at the "percent homogamous" column in Table 2 we can see that all of the percentages are large compared with ethnic homogamy. Both male and female Lutherans have the highest percent homogamously married and Baptists the lowest, but the variation in percentages is quite small among all of the groups.

After controlling for the effects of the other factors related to mate selection, we can see from the "adjusted percent homogamous" column in Table 2 that the percentages remain large and the variation among groups is even less than it was before holding the other variables constant. In other words, among the groups in the analysis, regardless of particular religious preference, religious homogamy appears to be an important consideration among couples either in the original choice of a mate or through conversion.

Variations in group size affect the random probability of marital homogamy. Thus, as described above, estimates were made of the "adjusted percent homogamous above random selection." The findings presented in this column of Table 2 suggest that while there may be little difference among religious groups in the actual percent who are married homogamously, Baptists may be somewhat more likely than the others to strive for religious homogamy in marriage. Catholics, on the other hand, appear to place less emphasis on religious homogamy than those in the other groups.

Overall, the findings presented in Table 2 suggest that religious preference does play an important role in marriage, either through mate selection or conversion. However, the data also show that even though a majority in all of the religious groups are homogamously married, there is some variation among groups in the salience of religious preference.

Before attempting to reach any conclusions from the data about the validity of a single or triple melting pot, we examined marital ethnic and religious homogamy by date of marriage. The purpose was to discover whether there has been any trend or movement toward one form of assimilation or another.

The figures in the "percent homogamous" column in Table 3 indicate that there may have been a decline in marital ethnic homogamy up to 1950. At that time there appears to have been a resurgence through the 1960's and then another decline in the 1970's. However, inspection of the findings shown in the "adjusted percent homogamous" column suggests that the observed decline in the 1970's may have been due to factors other than the importance of ethnicity in marital choice. If anything, the relevance of ethnicity in mate selection became even more important during the last decade.

Both the actual and adjusted percents religiously homogamous presented in Table 4 show that there was little change before 1960. However, although the percents remain relatively large, there is a decline in religious homogamy beginning in the 1960's and continuing through the 1970's.

CONCLUSIONS

Historically, cross-cultural marriages have been rather rare. Of course, propinquity played a part in limiting or facilitating contact, but even when the opportunity arose, people tended to avoid those who were socially and culturally different from themselves. This is not very surprising. Study upon study has demonstrated that people tend to feel more comfortable and get along better with those who hold the same values, beliefs, interests, or, in short, with those who are culturally homogamous. From this perspective, the idea of a melting pot might be viewed more as a utopian vision or dream than as a realistic proposition. But, within the context of American society, perhaps the idea is not so farfetched as it

might first appear to be. Social and cultural processes such as public education, the mass media, industrialization, participation in the labor force and in the nation's political system have fostered needs that cross ethnic boundaries and have brought people into contact with one another. The result appears to have been the development of a shared culture that is uniquely American. If true, then whether one is of Irish or German descent may have become less and less meaningful.

Religious values and beliefs are a part of the culture, but they are a part that is not necessarily tied to a particular nation or ethnic group. Furthermore, among believers religious values and beliefs are among those most deeply felt and thought important in one's life. Consequently, the idea of a triple melting pot would seem to make a considerable amount of sense. Being of Irish or German descent may become increasingly less important with each generation, but a group's religious heritage need not disappear with the rest of it. That is, as long as the religion "works," gives meaning or purpose to life, it will survive. Thus, the Catholic grandson of an Irishman may meet the Catholic granddaughter of a German and both may consider their Catholicism important, but give little or no attention to the national origin of their ancestors.

On the basis of our survey of Nebraskans we cannot conclude that ethnicity is unimportant as a factor in mate selection. Approximately four in ten are married to a spouse with the same national origin. However, after eliminating the influences of some other factors associated with mate selection, including marrying someone of the same ethnicity by chance, the percent who may be ethnically homogamous by choice becomes much smaller. Even in the group that appears to pay the greatest attention to choosing a spouse with the same ethnic background, those of Czechoslovakian descent, only about one-third are married homogamously.

According to our data, having a religiously homogamous marriage is characteristic of a large majority of Nebraskans. About eight of every ten couples say

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they have the same religious preference. Even after holding a number of other factors constant, the percent religiously homogamous remains high -- suggesting that this is not only common, but considered by many to be important.

As mentioned, Kennedy and Hollingshead analyzed their data by marriages between members of nationality groups and the three major religious groups in American society. When they found an increase in interethnic marriage, but no appreciable change in the rate of interfaith marriage, they concluded that the United States has a triple melting pot, a Protestant pot, a Catholic pot, and a Jewish pot. The Nebraska sample did not include enough Jewish respondents for separate analysis, but had we combined all of the Protestants into one group, we would have concluded that the state's married population is at least closer to a double than a single pot. Analyzing the data by Protestant denomination gives us a different picture. Nebraska has a multiple melting pot. That is, interethnic marriages are relatively common, but people tend to maintain religiously homogamous marriages, both within the Catholic Church and within the various Protestant denominations of Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian. It seems likely that the numerically smaller religious bodies function in much the same way, but we cannot be sure without additional data for further analysis.

At the outset of this report we quoted August Hollingshead's 1950 conclusion about the future of assimilation. It was his view that the melting pot would continue "boiling merrily side by side with little fusion between them for an indefinite period." Up to 1950 the Nebraska data show the same pattern as the one Hollingshead found in New Haven, a steady decline in marital ethnic homogamy and no significant change in marital religious homogamy. Interestingly, the last thirty years have not shown a clear continuation of these trends. The percentage of married couples who are ethnically homogamous has remained about the same in Nebraska since 1950 and the percents religiously homogamous have decreased since

1960. Any explanation of why these events have occurred and what their implications are for the future must be "beyond the data." Nevertheless, for whatever reasons, it does appear that the various melting pots may be boiling less vigorously in the years ahead and that a slow fusion may be beginning to occur.

Table 1. Marital Ethnic Homogamy in Nebraska, 1979

National Origin	Number[a]	Percent Homogamous	Adjusted Percent Homogamous[b]	Adjusted Percent Homogamous Above Random Selection[c]
Males				
Czechoslovakia	53	42.8	39.9	33.5
Denmark	41	11.3	16.3	12.7
England	109	37.5	39.6	25.5
Germany	375	58.2	53.2	10.5
Ireland	84	21.0	28.2	18.8
Poland	28	19.7	21.3	18.9
Sweden	50	21.8	24.3	16.8
Females				
Czechoslovakia	55	41.4	41.6	35.3
Denmark	30	15.5	19.3	14.4
England	119	34.2	35.2	22.3
Germany	361	59.5	55.3	10.9
Ireland	79	22.3	29.4	19.3
Poland	20	27.8	31.7	28.2
Sweden	63	17.3	19.2	13.2

[a]Weighted numbers (See footnote 1.).

[b]Adjusted by controlling for education, religion, religious homogamy, age at marriage, date of marriage, community size, and educational, religious, and ethnic propinquity.

[c]Percent after subtracting percentage of the opposite sex having the same ethnicity as the subject from the adjusted percent homogamous.

Table 2. Marital Religious Homogamy in Nebraska, 1979

Religious Preference	Number[a]	Percent Homogamous	Adjusted Percent Homogamous[b]	Adjusted Percent Homogamous Above Random Selection[c]
Males				
Baptist	65	76.8	82.5	77.6
Catholic	344	86.1	83.4	57.5
Lutheran	307	86.4	86.5	63.3
Methodist	239	82.6	81.6	63.4
Presbyterian	96	77.5	78.5	71.9
Females				
Baptist	68	73.3	78.0	73.3
Catholic	361	81.9	78.1	53.5
Lutheran	313	84.6	83.0	61.0
Methodist	254	77.6	77.6	60.5
Presbyterian	91	81.6	83.0	63.9

[a]Weighted numbers (See footnote 1.).

[b]Adjusted by controlling for education, ethnicity, ethnic homogamy, age at marriage, date of marriage, community size, and educational, religious, and ethnic propinquity.

[c]Percent after subtracting percentage of the opposite sex having the same religious preference as the subject from the adjusted percent homogamous.

Table 3. Marital Ethnic Homogamy in Nebraska by Date of Marriage, 1979.

Date of Marriage	Number[a]	Percent Homogamous	Adjusted Percent Homogamous[b]
Males			
Before 1930	33	59.2	56.3
1930 - 1939	68	48.2	46.9
1940 - 1949	136	35.0	37.6
1950 - 1959	184	40.4	39.2
1960 - 1969	174	45.9	40.9
1970 - 1979	246	38.7	42.3
Females			
Before 1930	33	59.2	55.0
1930 - 1939	68	48.2	41.5
1940 - 1949	136	35.9	35.9
1950 - 1959	184	40.4	37.9
1960 - 1969	174	45.9	43.2
1970 - 1979	246	38.7	44.3

[a]Weighted numbers (See footnote 1.).

[b]Adjusted by controlling for education, religion, religious homogamy, ethnicity, age at marriage, community size, and educational, religious, and ethnic propinquity.

Table 4. Marital Religious Homogamy in Nebraska by Date of Marriage, 1979.

Date of Marriage	Number[a]	Percent Homogamous	Adjusted Percent Homogamous[b]
Males			
Before 1930	53	84.7	86.0
1930 - 1939	118	90.5	92.8
1940 - 1949	233	85.7	86.9
1950 - 1959	303	88.4	87.9
1960 - 1969	281	77.8	75.5
1970 - 1979	400	69.4	70.2
Females			
Before 1930	53	84.7	85.0
1930 - 1939	118	90.5	91.8
1940 - 1949	233	85.7	86.4
1950 - 1959	303	88.4	89.2
1960 - 1969	281	77.8	76.5
1970 - 1979	400	69.4	69.1

[a]Weighted numbers (See footnote 1.).

[b]Adjusted by controlling for education, religion, ethnic homogamy, ethnicity, age at marriage, community size, and educational, religious, and ethnic propinquity.

FOOTNOTES

[1]The figures reported below are based on the weighted sample of 1,397. The weights assigned to respondents represent an adjustment for the difference between the sex ratio in the sample and the total population and to compensate for the differential probability of selection in households of varying sizes (See White, 1979: 16). Nonwhites were excluded from the present study due to their small numbers in the sample. While some other equally small populations are included in the general analysis (but not separately), it would have been inappropriate to do this with nonwhite groups since some of the factors associated with interracial marriage are quite different from those related to intermarriage between members of different white ethnic groups.

[2]Each propinquity measure was calculated as follows. First, for each individual we calculated across all other respondents of the opposite sex the reciprocal of the square of the physical distance to that person. We then summed these across all respondents of the opposite sex. This yields the total population potential for each respondent. We then repeated this procedure using only those respondents of the opposite sex having the same characteristic as the respondent (i.e., education, ethnicity, or religion). We then divided this result by the total population potential. The measure gives the probability of meeting someone of the opposite sex with the same characteristic relative to the probability of meeting someone of the opposite sex who does not share that characteristic.

[3]The method is called multiple classification analysis. See Andrews et al. (1973) and Miller and Erickson (1974) for a discussion of this procedure.

[4]This is consistent with findings from the 1978 NASIS. For example, among the seven ethnic groups included in the separate analysis in the present study, the 1978 survey showed persons of Czech descent to have the highest percentage saying their national origin is very important to them, that they have some knowledge of their ancestral language, and that they continue to practice some of the cultural traditions brought to America by their ancestors.

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List of reports already released using data gathered in the 1979 Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey. These may be purchased at the indicated price from the Bureau of Sociological Research of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Report Number	Title
1	Designs, Procedures, Instruments, and Forms for the 1979 NASIS. Lynn K. White. Price: $ 7.50.
2	Taxes: Are They Fair? Susan Welch and Alan Booth. Price: $ .50.
3	Nebraska's Children -- Learning to Work. Lynn K. White and David B. Brinkerhoff. Price: $ .75.
4	Nebraskans' Evaluations of their State Government. Alan Booth and Susan Welch. Price: $ .50.
5	Nebraskans and State Water Policy: Part I. Susan Welch and Gordon Kissel. Price: $ .50.
6	Energy: Voluntary Household Conservation in Nebraska. Lynn K. White and Nikolai Rudakov. Price: $1.00.
7	Nebraskans and State Water Policy: Part II. Susan Welch and Gordon Kissel. Price: $ .50.
8	Nebraskans and Their Mental Health. Peter G. Beeson and Alan Booth. Price: $1.00.